Prepositions as a Problematic Area for EFL Students

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Abstract

This paper discusses a problem or problems which occurs while using prepositions in English since there is no clear-cut logic in selecting them. It tackles some controversial points concerning prepositions, such as how and when they can form a pair or pairs with a given verb, whether or not they can come in isolation at the end of a sentence, and how to make other parts of speech not to occupy their position. The purpose of this paper is to show the perplexity of using prepositions especially for EFL learners including Iraqi ones.

إشكالية حروف الجر لطلاب الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية

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مستخلص البحث:

يناقش هذا البحث المشاكل التي تحدث أثناء استخدام حروف الجر الإنكليزية والناجمة عن عدم وجود منطق واضح في اختيارها. يعالج هذا البحث بعض الإشكاليات المتعلقة بحروف الجر مثل كيف ومتى يمكنها أن تشكل زوجا أو أزواجا مع فعل معين ومتى تأتي لوحدها في نهاية الجملة وكيف تشغل مكانها دون السماح لأجزاء الكلام الأخرى بذلك . يهدف البحث أيضا إلى استجلاء تعقيد استخدام حروف الجر وخصوصا لمتعلمي الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية بما في ذلك الطلبة العراقيين.

1. Introduction

Prepositions, as a class, tend to be acceptable to a great extent. They go where they are told and do what is asked of them (Batko, 2004:143).

Prepositions represent small words such as "by", "with", "for", "to" which can come in a position before nouns and pronouns in order to reveal the way by which they connect with other words in the sentence:

(1)They gave the flowers <u>to</u> their mother.

(Burt, 2004:165; Ellsworth and Higgins, n.d.:5)

But the prepositional phrases, which are defined as a combination of a preposition and a noun or pronoun follows it, will have different meanings. They are able to refer to where, when, why, how, or whose as in the following examples:

where= in the garden; when= until Monday; why=because of the bad

weather; how=by train; whose =of the bride (Swick, 2005:92).

Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish prepositions from adverbs, especially adverbs of place or direction:

(2)I looked <u>up</u> the chimney. ("up" is a preposition)

(3)I looked <u>up</u> . ("up" refers to an adverb) (Leech et al, 1982:52)

In prepositional phrases, the object of preposition can take the form of a noun or pronoun:

(4)It's a letter <u>from</u> Mr. Brown. (Swick, 2010:99)

Prepositional phrases are composed of preposition, object of the preposition, and modifiers of the object. Phrasal prepositions are prepositions that include more than one word (Jones et al, 2001:16). It is considerable that prepositions differ to some degree among the different dialects of English. Some differences can be detected between British and North American English regarding the use of prepositions. For example :

British Usage:

(5)There is a fence <u>about</u> the garden.

American Usage:

(6)There is a fence <u>around</u> the garden.

(Ansell, 2000:402)

The description of the writer's sentence can be developed or improved by using prepositions which make significant differences in meaning, increasing the amount of information provided, and expressing relationships (Jones et al, 2001:1).

Prepositions have the following characteristics :

- **Help to clarify directions.**
- **Cannot be alone.**
- **An object is required.**
- **Occur in a phrase always.**
- **Almost always come at the beginning of a phrase.**

2. Simple, Complex and Compound prepositions

Simple prepositions are represented by single words as "at", "of", "to" and "with" which can be of many different possible meanings(Yule, 2006:125).

The simple prepositions form a small number of monosyllabic elements. On the other hand, there are polysyllabic prepositions and some of them are compounds made historically from the monosyllabic ones such as "inside", "within" or can be derived from participles such as "during" or may be transformed from other languages such as "despite", "except".

The number of prepositions has been multiplied to a certain extent by using more participles such as "barring", "concerning", "granted" on the one hand. On the other hand, the number of prepositions has mainly been increased in the way by which prepositions can be joined with other words to make complex prepositions(Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:190).

Many compound prepositions appear without complements in a similar way to some simple prepositions. When the preposition is at the end of the compound phrase, it will be removed when the complement is absent. For example:

(7)The captain is asleep. I'm <u>in charge</u> (of the ship) now.

(Spankie, 1987:170)

Complex prepositions form two main types:

a. a simple preposition which comes after a participle, adjective, adverb, or conjunction such as "owing to", "devoid of", "away from", "because of".
b. a simple preposition which occurs before a noun and another simple preposition such as "in charge of", "by means of", "in addition to", etc.(Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990:190).

3. Problems That ESL/EFL Students Have With Prepositions

English, like many languages, refers to thematic roles by using prepositions. For those students whose native language contains either prepositions or postpositions, English prepositions continues to represent a source of difficulty, and they remain so even there is an increase regarding students' level of proficiency. One reason for this is the problem of polysemy. Students try to make similarities between their L1 prepositions and those in the L2 while learning a second language(Cowan, 2008:163).

The learner must take the process of choosing the correct preposition into account. A good dictionary will be useful concerning this matter: "comply with", "protest at", "ignorant of", etc. (Burt, 2004:165).

Another source of the difficulty that ESL/EFL students face while learning prepositions may be represented by L1 transfer(Cowan, 2008:163).

The learner must not, to a great extent, take into consideration the advice not to put a preposition at the end of a sentence:

(8)<u>With</u> whom are you?

(9)Who are you <u>with</u> ? (ibid)

Prepositions often seem to form a main problem for learners. There are many reasons which lead to a such result :

(a)English has so many prepositions in comparison with a lot of other languages, and learners often should make choices and distinctions that are of no necessity regarding their own language.

(b) Many choices are particularly difficult to remember because they have little or no meaning (Parrott, 2000:83).

4. Functions of Prepositional Phrases

The prepositional phrase is composed of two elements including a preposition and the complement of the preposition. The

prepositional complement consists mainly of a noun phrase, an –ing participle clause, or a wh-clause (Greenbaum, 1996:300).

A. Postmodifier of a noun :

(10)The people on the bus were singing .

B. Complement of a verb :

(11)We were looking at his awful paintings .

In this function and the one that follows it, the preposition is more clearly connected to the word that comes before it than to the prepositional complement.

C. Complement of an adjective(postmodifier of an adjective) :

(12)I am sorry for his parents .(Greenbaum, 1996:302-3; Quirk et al, 1985: 657)

D. Adjunct :

(13)The people were singing on the bus .

E. Disjunct :

(14)He did, in all fairness, try to phone the police .

F. Conjunct :

(15)On the other hand, he made no attempt to help the victim or apprehend her attacker .

As conjuncts, prepositional phrases are largely composed of idiomatic phrases; "of course", "in a word", "with respect", "in conclusion", "at any rate", etc.

G. Sometimes, prepositional phrases, like adverbs, may have a nominal function, e.g. either as subject of a clause, or even as prepositional complement :

(16) Between six and seven will suit me .

He crawled out from under the table .(Quirk et al,1972:304-5)

H. Adverbials which can be of a number of different structures. One of these structures is the prepositional phrases :

(17)Peter was playing with great skill .(Leech and Svartvik, 2003: 177, 254)

Finally, a verb or a transitive adjective requires a particular preposition to follow it(e.g., to rely on X, to distinguish X from Y, to be cognizant of X). In a similar way a certain noun phrase requires a certain preposition to precede it (e.g., in my opinion, to my mind, from my point of view)and sometimes followed by one, as well (in lieu of, with regard to) (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999:

34).The process of mastering these parts of speech appears to be one of the most difficult tasks for the student of English. It is a matter of learning which needs a great deal of practice and intelligent reading with the "idiomatic eye" open (Abdel Aal and Darwish,1998: 166).

5. Selected English and Arabic prepositions and their Pedagogical Implications :

English and Arabic are of two different language families. As a result, there is no surprise that Arab students of English as a foreign language(henceforth EFL) find it difficult to learn English in general(Hamdallah and Tushyehh,n.d.:181).

Prepositions represent function words that have the ability to combine words, phrases, or clauses with other words in the sentence. They cannot be inflected and they are of distinctive characteristic to express such ideas as location, destinations, direction of motion, time, manner, and so on. The following is an explanation of some English and Arabic prepositions with examples :

1. **To /? ila/ :**

(18)I went to Amman.
/ðahabtu ?ila 9amman/

2. **For /li / :**

For them /lahum/

3. **In: /fi:?(separate), /bi/(inseparable) :**

(19)In the library.
/bilmaktabati/ (in)
To multiply by /Daraba fi:/

4. **Of (exists only in English) :**

(20)I am proud of him.
/? ana fakhouron bihi/ (in) (ibid)

Zughoul(1979, cited in R. W. Hamdallah and H. Y. Tushyehh,n.d.:183) made a classification of the prepositions that happen in the classroom phrases. He fell them into three types :

1. **Case Prepositions :**

(21)Go with Ali

2. **Lexical Prepositions :**

(22)Stand up

3. **Unit Prepositions ::**

(23)Turn to lesson 6

Both case and lexical prepositions have direct translations in Arabic :

Case Prepositions	English	Arabic
agentive	by	/min qibali/
instrumental	with	/ibi/
dative	to	/li/
beneficiary	for	/li/ or /li?ajli/
genitive construction	of	/al?idafah/
comitative	with	/ma9a/
Lexical Prepositions	**English**	**Arabic**
	up	/?a9la/
	down	/?asfal/
	on top of	/fowqa/

(ibid)

5.1 General Characteristics of English and Arabic Prepositions :

A. English Prepositions :

Prepositions in English express a relation between two grammatical factors represented by prepositional complement and the object. For example, in the following sentence :

(24)She put the sweater on her shoulder.

There is a mutual relationship between1 the complement of the preposition, <u>her shoulder</u> and the object <u>the sweater</u> (Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.:184).

Different prepositions used with the same word tend to give very different meanings. The construction of verb+ particle supplies good example to explain this : the compound construction "look at" can have a completely different meaning if "for', "up", or "after" can be used instead of "at" . English prepositions have the property to be used with different parts of speech of the same base word. One preposition can be utilized with the verb form, another with the adjective and still another with the noun form of the word. For example, 'we are <u>fond of</u> something' but 'we have <u>fondness for</u> it'. (ibid)

B. Arabic Prepositions:

Arabic words are classified into three classes by Arab grammarians :

?asmaa?, ?af9aal and huruuf which represent nouns, verbs and particles successively (Ibn Hisham, 1969: 8).

Arabic prepositions :

1. **The first class is composed of prepositions of one consonant and one short vowel as well : These prepositions are inseparable . Their occurrence is as prefixes to the complement :**

   bi… at, by, in, with

   ka… as, like (ibid)

2. **The second class is composed of prepositions which are free and either biliteral or trilateral. These prepositions are separable.**

   a. **biliteral**

fii in, at

kay in order to

   b. **trilateral**

9adaa except

hattaa until, up to

All Arabic prepositions such as "bi…", "fii…", "9alaa", "?ilaa", "li…", "min", "qan", "munðu", except "munðu" can do, like English preposition, both spatially and temporarily (Hamdallah, 1988 cited in Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.: 184)

The Arabic preposition "fii" can function as an equivalent of "in, into, at, on, during, within, inside" and the zero equivalent(?) in English as well. It represents the device that allows all these English equivalents to pass through it. As a result, "fii", in addition to other Arabic prepositions, interferes in the selection and usage of English ones as in the following examples:

(25) I slept(in) bed. (correct response) (in)

(26) Spring begins in the first of March. (on) (Habash,1982:n. p.)

5.2 Sources of Difficulty and Linguistic Problems :

Thahir(1987, cited in Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.: 185) states that there are problems caused by English prepositions for Arab students learning English. They try to ignore the English preposition and to use the Arabic one in place of it (Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.:185).

In standard grammars, there are no enough scientific studies to deal with them (Winslow, 2006:n.p.).

Scientific studies such as those made by D.C. Bennett or K.G. Lindquist(cited in Winslow, 2006: n.p.) reveal that prepositions are very difficult concerning the systematic theoretical description of their semantic or syntagmatic relations. Each preposition has its proper and general meaning which, by continuing and accurate use or practice, has become greater in number and fell into a various difference of meanings almost similar to the original one. That is the reason which leads to the difficulty of studying prepositions and drives people to say that who knows all prepositions knows the language well (ibid).

Prepositions tend to be somehow tricky. Thousands of idiomatic expressions can find their way to create some main difficulties and misunderstandings (Brown, 2003: n.p.).

Non-native speaker or learner encounters problems made by prepositions more than any other part of speech. Why? Prepositions represent quite little words of no change in form. They are likely pronounced softly, in unstressed syllables. They are not even written in capital letters in book titles. Native speakers have the ability to select the correct ones without thinking(Grubic, 2004: 5).

There are several reasons or challenges that make prepositions difficult for second language learners. Two of these difficulties will be discussed here. First, prepositions are not always similar to each other in a good way from language to language (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 401). For instance, the English sentence :
(27)The woman walked <u>in</u> the rain, whose translation in French is :
(28)La femme marche <u>sous</u> la pluie(The woman walks under the rain).
Second, to describe the semantics of prepositions appears of clear difficulty. For instance, it is just unclear to distinguish between prepositions such as "over" and "above". On one hand the sentence :
(29)The picture is <u>over</u> the mantle, can be paraphrased as :
(30)The picture is <u>above</u> the mantle. On the other hand, the sentence: (31)Mary crawled <u>over</u> the bridge, has a meaning which seems to be completely different from:

(32)Mary crawled above the bridge (Evans and Tyler, n.d.: 2).

5.3 Errors concerning prepositions:

In general, there are three categories regarding the use of English prepositions by Arab learners: substitution errors, redundant errors, and omission errors (Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.: 186).

1. Errors of substitution : it represents the use of a wrong word. Seemingly, both the students' mother tongue interference and the influence of the target language itself bring out instances of the substitution of prepositions (Tahaineh, 2010: 89).

Below are examples to clarify this status :

a. *in the third day. b. *think in.(Hamdallah and Tushyehh, n.d.: 186)

2. Errors of Redundant : it occurs when an unnecessary word was interjected or when only one word was demanded and two or more words were utilized instead. Examples are :

a. *judge on things.

b. *treating with others. (ibid: 187)

3. Errors of Omission : it means the omission of prepositions from places in which they are necessary to be used (Tahaineh, 2010: 96).

Examples are :

a. *He came Monday.

b. *I was born 22nd of May, 1978.

The prepositions "in", "on", and "at" can be accompanied by a large number of errors. These prepositions, occurring with temporal and spatial relationships, can cause confusion readily.

1. Spatial meanings of "in", "on", "at" :

(33)John is standing on the sidewalk. (two- dimensional)

(34)John is in the house. (three-dimensional)

(35)John is at the corner. (one-dimensional)

2. Temporal meanings as to "in", "on", "at" :

(36)It happened in 1960. (before months, seasons, years and it is possible to say : in the morning, evening, afternoon)

(37)It happened on Dec. 10. (before dates and days of the week)

(38)It happened <u>at</u> 9:15. (before times of the day like noon, midnight, night, dawn, dusk, sunrise, and sunset.) (Grubic, 2004: 22).

3. Source meanings of "from" and (out) of :

(39)Paper is made (out) of wood. (source is not seen clearly)

(40)This table is made (out) of wood. (source is not seen clearly)

4. in/ within as for temporal use(not the contrast)

(41)Come back <u>in</u> 30 minutes . (30 minutes from now)

(42)Come back <u>within</u> 30 minutes. (refers to the duration of the length of time that sth lasts or is able to continue)

5. The length of time can be expressed by using since/for

(43)I have lived here since 1960. (refers to the beginning of the period of time)

(44)I have lived here for 16 years. (refers to the duration of the period of time) (ibid: 23).

6. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results:

6.1 Introduction:

Test is represented by any procedure for measuring ability, knowledge, or performance (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 546). There is an endeavor to examine the theoretical issues mentioned earlier by doing a questionnaire for 35 Fourth-Year Iraqi students in the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Anbar. The goal of the test is to evaluate the students' performance and the level of their recognition and production with respect to prepositions. Generally speaking, the importance of the tests, on the part of the teacher, is that he/she will check the level of his/her students. This procedure provides him/her with the ability to use the suitable classroom techniques so as to improve the comprehension and production of his/her students when their level is weak and if they do well in the test, he/she can enhance the way(s) adopted in order to promote his students' performance. By using tests, it will be possible to determine whether understanding of grammar or any other field of study is positive or negative. This test is given to the students at their last year of study in the university because this year represents their final learning(advanced level) before going to high studies. Students have studied prepositions from primary schools till the last year of university and this a good

reason to examine their knowledge of prepositions at this stage. In test I., the students are required to choose one of the four choices given(by multiple choice).

This Technique examines the students' capacity to select the appropriate preposition according to the sentence context. Heaton(1975:21) states that multiple-choice item includes the incomplete statement type attached to a number of options and the student is going to choose one of them.

In item II., the completion technique is used to measure the students' ability to produce a suitable preposition for the purpose of completing each of the sentences given.

Harris(1968:8) believes that such kind of questions which requires short answers will provide the students with an opportunity to compose their own responses. Allen and Corder(1974:322) suggests that the advantages of such tests are as follows:

1. There is no possibility of anybody getting the right answer by chance.

2. It examines the productive skills unlike multiple choice items, which test

The receptive skills.

In item III., the student is asked to recognize compound prepositions

and to underline them in a certain number of sentences. Some books of grammar are used for forming the items of the questions given: English Grammar Tests: English as a Second Language; How English Works; and An Introductory English Grammar. One mark is given to each sentence answered correctly and zero if it is not.

The test aims at:

a.To determine to what extent the students know about English prepositions.

b.To discover the difficulties or problems which the students face while learning prepositions.

c. To lessen the obstacles met by the students and to make easy the process of learning prepositions.

d.To suggest to the designers of syllabuses to prepare books taking care of prepositions widely.

The students chosen to take part in the present test are restricted to 35 Fourth-Year Iraqi students in the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Anbar at the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011. The candidates are selected randomly with no male/female distinction.

Boyle and Fisher(2007: 59) display that "validity is how well our test measures what it says it measures". In other words, validity means that the test measures what we want it to measure (ibid: 65) .

Richards and Schmidt(2002: 575) manifest that "validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, or can be used successfully for the purpose for which it is intended".

Richards and Schmidt(ibid: 454) state that "Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a test gives consistent results. A test is said to be reliable if it gives the same results when it is given on different occasions or when it is used by different people". They (ibid) add that reliability coefficient refers to a numerical factor concerning test reliability that can be obtained by connecting two groups of scores on tests that take place at the same time, repeated test conductings, or the two parts of a test. Its values, theoretically, fluctuate between 0.0 and +1.0.

6.2 Data Analysis:

The analysis carried out will be tabulated as follows:

6.2.1 Recognition Test: (See Ellis,1994:47-48)

Recognition, Test I.

Table(1): Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of the overall item, Recognition, Test I.

Sentence	Correct Responses		Incorrect Responses	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	14	40.0	21	60.0
2	33	94.0	2	6.0
3	15	43.0	20	57.0
4	34	97.0	1	3.0
5	30	86.0	5	14.0
6	31	89.0	4	11.0
7	27	77.0	8	23.0
8	10	29.0	25	71.0
9	12	34.0	23	66.0

10	9	26.0	26	74.0

Here, the researcher gives the students a group of incomplete sentences and four options for each. The student is asked to choose the correct answer due to the sentence context supplied (See Appendix(I).

Sentence 1: I live in the big house…..the corner.

I live in the big house on the corner.

In this sentence, the preposition "on" is needed because of the noun phrase "the corner" which follows it. Many students chose the preposition "in" instead of "on" under the influence of their mother tongue, i.e., Arabic.

Most of the students think that "corner" equals "زاوية", so they have chosen "in" to say "في الزاوية" but here, "corner" can be translated into "ملتقى شارعين", so "on" is to be used in lieu of "in"(See Abbas,1961:360). Here, "on" is used to indicate 'in a particular position in relation to sth else' while "in" can be utilized 'with the name of a container, place, or area to say where someone or something is'. Besides, "on" is used when the place is conceived as a line or surface(1 or 2 dimensions); "in" is used for area or volume(2 or 3 dimensions). In this sentence, the word "corner" needs (of sth)when "in" is to be used, e.g.:

She lives in a quiet corner of rural Yorkshire.

Again, most of the students have chosen "in" in place of "on" under the influence of overgeneralization that arises from the uncertainty in the students' mind and also that the Arabic preposition "fii" interferes in the selection and usage of the English preposition "in".

Table(2) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 1)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	21	60.0
Correct Responses	14	40.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(2) reveals that fourteen students, i.e.(40%), out of thirty five, have the ability to recognize and choose the exact required

preposition. However, Table(2) indicates that twenty one students have failed to mark and select the suitable preposition.

Sentence(2) : Please put the plates……the table.

Please put the plates on the table.

Here, most students chose the preposition "on" because it seems common that the noun phrase "the table" needs this preposition to come in front of it, i.e., they are familiar with the use of such a preposition in such a context. In

place, simple position the preposition "on" is used and it means (على) in Arabic : The book is on the table. الكتاب على المنضدة (See Lindstromberg, 2010:185)

It can be concluded that if there is an equivalent Arabic preposition for that used in English, the matter will tend to be less difficult.

The same preposition "on" is used here as that used in sentence(1) but the noun phrase "the table" used in this sentence makes it easy to choose the preposition "on". "On" is utilized here to describe the position of one thing resting on something else.

Table(3) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 2)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	2	6.0
Correct Responses	33	94.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(3) shows that thirty three students (94%), out of thirty five, have managed to recognize and select the correct preposition. Otherwise, Table(3) displays that two students only(6%) have not answered the question correctly. Sentence 2, regarding correct answers, has scored a degree more than that of the first sentence.

Sentence 3: My car will not start because it is…….gas.

My car will not start because it is out of gas.

The students who have answered sentence(3) correctly are less than those who answered it incorrectly. Many of the students seem to have enough knowledge as for the meaning and use of the compound preposition "out of". The researcher believes that most of the students have not taken care of whether the sentence is

negative(not) or positive and consequently they have chosen the preposition randomly. "Out of" is used here to show that sb/sth does not have any of sth which may be unfamiliar for most of the students. "Out of", with respect to this context, has no equivalent Arabic preposition, so the students find it difficult to look at it as a correct preposition. The error committed here can be attributed to the influence of overgeneralization caused by the uncertainty in the students' mind (See McLaughlin,1987:61).

Table(4) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 3)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	20	57.0
Correct Responses	15	43.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(4) tells us that fifteen students (43%), out of thirty five, have achieved success by choosing the appropriate preposition "out of" On the other hand, Table(4) states that twenty students(57%) are not able to recognize and choose this compound preposition.

Sentence 4: The second hotel was different………the first.

The second hotel was different from the first.

Table(5) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 4)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	1	3.0
Correct Responses	34	97.0
Total	35	100.0

Most students have done well as regards the process of recognizing and choosing the suitable preposition "from" because they know well that the word "different" demands the preposition "from" to refer to the difference between two things. This denotes the simplicity of using the preposition "from" with the adjective "different". "From" is employed here to distinguish between two people or things. "Different from" is standard and it is followed by a noun or pronoun (See Schmitt(ed.),2002:117-118).

Table(5) demonstrates that thirty four students(97%), out of thirty five, have chosen the right preposition "from" because its Arabic equivalent "ᶜan:عن"is available. For example: She differs

from others.=تختلف عن غيرها=ta-xtalif-u ᶜan ghayr-i-haa. The students have adequate amount of exposure to this preposition in their textbooks. Meanwhile, Table(5) declares that one student only (3%) has not done this sentence successfully.
Sentence(4) has scored, as concerns correct answers, the best degree in all the sentences provided in item I.

Sentence 5: George was worried……….his father's health.

George was worried <u>about</u> his father's health.

Most students have done this sentence in a good way, i.e., they have chosen the proper preposition "about" and this is due to students' acquaintance with the situation given. Most students know that the verb "worried" collocates with the preposition "about" to form a prepositional verb and also the meaning of the noun phrase "his father's health" needs this preposition to precede it. The preposition, here, tends to be common in our everyday expressions. "About" is used here to show why someone is angry, happy, upset etc. Some of the students have selected "on=ala" in place of "about" to mean(قلقا <u>على</u> صحة والده) in the same way as that used in their mother tongue(See Corder, 1981:65). They try to translate from English into Arabic before choosing the correct preposition.

Table(6) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 5)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	5	14.0
Correct Responses	30	86.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(6) exhibits that thirty students (86%), out of thirty five, have been qualified to recognize and select the correct preposition. On the other hand, Table(6) refers to the fact that five students only have been unable to do their task well.

Sentence 6: I don't know how many times I have told my daughter to

look at both sides before running……….the street.

I don't know how many times I have told my daughter to
look at both sides before running <u>across</u> the street.

Most students have the ability to select the suitable preposition "across" since they are conscious of the information that this preposition can be followed by a noun phrase such as "the street"(See Corder,1973:275-277). "Across" and its Arabic equivalent(ebra=عبر), as a preposition, is used to mean' moving or looking from one side of a place, space, or line to the other' and it is culturally learned by Iraqi students. As well as, "across", as a preposition, is followed by a noun while "across", as an adverb, is used without a following noun. "Cross", on the other hand, as a verb, can mean to go from one side of something to the other.

Table(7) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 6)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	4	11.0
Correct Responses	31	89.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(7) shows that thirty one students (89%), out of thirty five, have responded to this sentence skillfully by choosing the proper preposition "across". On the contrary, Table(7) introduces the fact that four students only have lacked the ability to do their job.

Sentence 7: My house is…………the grocery store and gas station.

My house is <u>between</u> the grocery store and gas station.

The number of the students who have culled the valid preposition from the options given in this sentence is large since most of them are mindful that the preposition "between" should be used when speaking of two whether they are animate or inanimate. There is an enough exposure to this preposition in the students' textbooks.

Table(8) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I.(Sentence 7)

	No.	%

Incorrect Responses	**8**	**23.0**
Correct Responses	**27**	**77.0**
Total	**35**	**100.0**

Table(8) reveals that twenty seven students (77%), out of thirty five, have optioned the accurate preposition "between". Otherwise, Table(8) notifies us that eight students only(23%) have failed to elect the feasible preposition.

Sentence 8: I have some material from which I could knock….an article.

I have some material from which I could knock <u>off</u> an article.

Here, the verb "knock" requires the particle "off" to form a phrasal verb "knock off" which means to complete sth quickly and without much effort. In this context, "knock off" equals "write" and most students find it difficult to pick the particle "off" to formulate the phrasal verb "knock off" as they are not cognizant of this verb which consists of two words and accordingly they do not perceive its meaning. The particle "off", here, has no equivalent in Arabic like "in=fii", "to=ila" and on=ala"(See Ellis,1994:57-61).

Table(9) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 8)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	**25**	**71.0**
Correct Responses	**10**	**29.0**
Total	**35**	**100.0**

Table(9) informs us that ten students only (29%), out of thirty five, have chosen the sound particle "off". Besides, twenty five students (71%) have not been intelligent enough to option the suitable particle "off".

Sentence 9: I graduated from college……2002.

I graduated from college <u>in</u> 2002.

Most students believe that <u>years</u> in English must be preceded by the preposition "since" in place of the preposition "in" with respect to this sentence context. As the form of the verb in this sentence is in

the past simple, therefore the time marker which has to be put into service must be(in+ year). The preposition "in" is used here to mean during a period of time such as 'in 1999', 'in 2003', etc. Most students appear to have no good knowledge about this fact. The preposition "since" can be used when the main verb in the sentence is in the present perfect. Most of the students overgeneralized the preposition "since" to be used instead of "in"(See Fitikides,2002:83-88). The ignorance of L2 rules drives the students to select prepositions haphazardly.

Table(10) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 9)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	23	66.0
Correct Responses	12	34.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(10) provides us with the information that twenty students only(34%), out of thirty five, have been able to select the just preposition "in". In addition to, Table(10) expresses the fact that twenty three (66%) students have lacked the ability to achieve success.

Sentence 10: You are really annoying me. You're doing it….purpose,
aren't you?
You are really annoying me. You're doing it <u>on</u> purpose,
aren't you?

A very few number of students have culled the straight preposition "on" from the choices supplied. Most of them cannot recognize that the preposition "on" can go with the word "purpose" to compose an idiomatic expression "on purpose" whose meaning is 'not by accident; deliberately'. The idiomatic usage of English prepositions makes them difficult to learn even by native speakers of the language.

Table(11) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item I. (Sentence 10)

	No.	%

Incorrect Responses	26	74.0
Correct Responses	9	26.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(11) leads us to the fact that nine students only(26%), out of thirty five, have picked the convenient preposition "on". Over and above, Table(11) carries the fact that twenty six students(74%) have seemed to be unable to choose the exact preposition.

6.2.2 Production Test: (See Ellis,1994:47-48)

Table(12): Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of the overall item, Production, Test II.

Sentence	Correct Responses		Incorrect Responses	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	5	14.0	30	86.0
2	zero	0.0	35	100.0
3	13	37.0	22	63.0
4	zero	0.0	35	100.0
5	24	69.0	11	31.0
6	1	3.0	34	97.0
7	zero	0.0	35	100.0
8	zero	0.0	35	100.0
9	zero	0.0	35	100.0
10	15	43.0	20	57.0

In this item, the students are required to complete a number of incomplete sentences by using an appropriate preposition for each. Here, the students' ability to produce the correct preposition for each sentence will be checked. If the student can recognize the context or situation well, he/she will be able to provide the right preposition. The technique of completion is used here.(See Appendix(II).

Sentence 1: Can I stay…….the weekend?

Can I stay <u>until</u> the weekend?

In this sentence, the preposition "until" is demanded to indicate that something will take place around a certain time. In an informal style, "till" is incorporated rather than "until". Most students applied the prepositions "in" and "to" as they have lost their

capacity to recognize the meaning of the sentence and then to produce the compatible preposition. "Until" can function as a subordinate conjunction when it is followed by a subject and a verb, e.g. 'Until your hiccups stop' but here, it is a preposition followed by a noun "weekend" to form a prepositional phrase "until the weekend". Most of the students who have provided "in" instead of "until" have made that since they think that it is possible to say "*in the weekend" in the same way as "in the morning, in the evening, etc. Others have given "to" in lieu of "until" under the influence of their mother tongue to form "*to the weekend" which can be translated into (إلى نهاية الاسبوع) in place of "until the weekend" which can be translated into (حتى نهاية الإسبوع). The Arabic preposition "ila" interferes in the providing and usage of the English preposition "to".

Table(13) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 1)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	30	86.0
Correct Responses	5	14.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(13) notifies that five students only (14%), out of thirty five, have succeeded to supply the appropriate preposition. However, Table (13) gives the fact that thirty students (86%) have failed to grant the proper preposition "until".

Sentence 2: You ought to use this meat……tomorrow.

You ought to use this meat by tomorrow.

All of the students have lacked the possibility to supply the sound preposition "by" which is utilized here to mean " not later than a particular time or date", i.e., "by" means "before or until". That is to say, they are unable to apprehend its meaning according to the situation expressed. The students appear to have no idea that the preposition "by" can collocate with the noun or word "tomorrow", i.e., they are unfamiliar with the use of it or it may not be used in their textbooks. "By", as a preposition, is to be followed by a noun

but, as an adverb, can be used without a following noun. Most of the students have supplied "from=من" in lieu of "by" to say " من البارحة". In the same way, some of the students have given "for= منذ" instead of "by" to say"منذ أمس أو منذ البارحة". In these two cases, the students have depended on their mother tongue to determine which preposition has to be provided.

Table(14) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 2)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	35	100.0
Correct Responses	zero	0.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(14) clarifies the fact that none of the students(naught%) , out of thirty five, have performed well. Furthermore, all of the students(100%) have gone wrong to solve this sentence correctly. The students have no idea that the preposition "by" can go with the noun or word "tomorrow", i.e. they are unfamiliar with the use of it.

Sentence 3: She was standing………a crowd of children.
She was standing <u>among</u> a crowd of children.

Although the meaning and use of "among" are common to many students, a little of them, thirteen students only(37%), out of thirty five, have furnished the seasonable preposition "among". The major number of students, twenty two(63%), out of thirty five, have no capability to equip the feasible preposition as they cannot distinguish between "among" and "between". "Among" is used when there are more than two people or things; "between" is practiced when there are only two. The error done here can be ascribed to the false application of rules which happens when students know certain rules of L2 but they continue in forming incorrect patterns by applying them to other new situations where there is no possibility to utilize them.

Table(15) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses

of item II. (Sentence 3)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	22	63.0
Correct Responses	13	37.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(15) states that thirteen students only(37%), out of thirty five, have done well regarding the process of providing the fit preposition. Moreover, Table(15) demonstrates that twenty two students(63%) have been of no faculty as for the matter of producing the adequate preposition.

Sentence 4: Drinks will be served……..the interval.

Drinks will be served <u>during</u> the interval.

Concerning this sentence, none of the students (zero%), out of thirty five, have produced the correct preposition "during" which is put into action to say when something occurs. This drives us to the truth that thirty five students(100%) have been incapable of supplying the straight preposition since they do not perceive that the word "interval" denotes a period of time and it needs, in accordance with the sentence given, to be preceded by the preposition "during". The percentage, concerning correct answers, attracts the attention to the difficulty of providing the preposition "during" in this situation. Most students have supplied the preposition "in" instead of "during" because they believe that the word "interval" used here refers to a place rather than a time. This error, as the researcher believes, can be attributed to teaching-learning problems. (See Corder,1981:283)

Table(16) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 4)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	35	100.0
Correct Responses	zero	0.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(16) manifests that none of the students(0.0%), out of thirty five, have been able to provide the proper preposition "during". As well as, Table(16) informs us that all the students, i.e. thirty five ones(100%) have been unable to produce the suited preposition.

Sentence 5: Promise you'll write…….me every day.

Promise you'll write <u>to</u> me every day.

Here, twenty four students(69%), out of thirty five, have produced the accurate preposition "to" as the structure and words of this sentence are clear-cut. Apart from, eleven students only(31%) have sounded to be of no adequate knowledge to produce "to" in this context which can be ascribed to their weak level in recognition and production English prepositions. "To" is used here to show the person or thing that receives sth. Some of the students have given "for" instead of "to" since the literal translation of sentence(5) has the Arabic preposition "li" indicating the possessive. This Arabic preposition is equivalent to the English prepositions "to" and "for".

Table(17) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses
of item II. (Sentence 5)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	11	31.0
Correct Responses	24	69.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(17) reflects that twenty four students(69%), out of thirty five, have performed well giving the correct preposition "to". Along with, Table(17) manifests the verity that eleven students only(31%) have lost their way to produce the right preposition.

Sentence 6: Congratulations….your success.

Congratulations <u>on</u> your success.

It is obvious here that only one student has produced the just preposition "on" which can be ascribed to the students' unfamiliarity with the use of "on" in this situation. The students have no knowledge that the word "congratulations" demands the

preposition "on" to follow it when talking about abstract nouns like "success". They cannot expect that "on" can be used in a sentence like this one. "On" is used here to mean "about sth/sb".

Table(18) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 6)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	34	97.0
Correct Responses	1	3.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(18) provides us with the information that one student only(3%), out of thirty five, has been able to produce the congruous preposition "on". Furthermore, Table(18) instructs us that thirty four students(97%) have been incapable of providing the fitting preposition.

Sentence 7: Nobody entered……the room.

Nobody entered <u>no preposition</u> the room.

All the students have been unable to recognize that this sentence does not need a preposition. The verb "enter" is in no need of any preposition to follow it and also the noun phrase "the room" does not require a preposition to precede it in this context. As the students are asked to supply a preposition to fill the blank space given, they believe that a preposition is to be provided. The students cannot apprehend the fact that there is no need to produce a preposition here, i.e. they are unable to perceive that this sentence is a grammatical and meaningful one without a preposition. Therefore, the use of any preposition here is due to bad teaching-learning habits. The relationship between "enter" and "room" can be achieved without referring to any preposition in English.

Table(19) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Reponses of Item II. (Sentence 7)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	35	100.0
Correct Responses	zero	0.0

Total	**35**	**100.0**

Table(19)reveals that all the students(100%), out of thirty five, have been unable to answer skillfully. Otherwise, Table(19) shows that there is no student(0.0%) to answer this sentence successfully.

Sentence 8: She sat down……….me and started talking to me.

She sat down <u>opposite</u> me and started talking to me.

The preposition "opposite", here, means on the other side of a particular area from sb/sth, and usually facing them. No student has been able to produce the correct preposition "opposite" since he/she is not able to recognize that the verb "sat" requires "opposite" to follow it and the pronoun "me" demands the same preposition to precede it. The students are not well aware of the meaning and use of "opposite" in this sentence context and it may not be practiced in their textbooks.

Table(20) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 8)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	**35**	**100.0**
Correct Responses	**zero**	**0.0**
Total	**35**	**100.0**

Table(20) clarifies that no student(0.0%), out of thirty five, has been able to provide the right preposition "opposite". Consequently, Table(20) instructs us that thirty five students(100%) have failed to give the suitable preposition.

Sentence 9: There's a supermarket………..my house.

There's a supermarket <u>opposite</u> my house.

Here, none of the students has been able to produce the suitable preposition "opposite". In this sentence the same preposition "opposite" is required as that used in sentence(8). In sentence(9) the structure is different from that of sentence(8) because the preposition "opposite", here, is preceded by the noun "supermarket" and followed by the noun phrase "my house". Also, the preposition "opposite" has been used in sentence(9) between two inanimate nouns while it is utilized between a verb and a pronoun which refers to an animate person in sentence(8). Although the

structure of sentence(9) is different from that of sentence(8), but the same preposition "opposite" is demanded. The students have not intelligent enough to produce the preposition "opposite" in these two different structures and situations. Here, "opposite" means "on the other side of the road". The great majority of the errors made in the use of prepositions can be ascribed to the students' mother tongue interference and the influence of the target language itself.

Table(21) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 9)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	35	100.0
Correct Responses	zero	0.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(21) exhibits that none of the students(0.0%), out of thirty five, has been able to produce the sound preposition "opposite". Accordingly, Table(21) introduces the truth that thirty five students(100%) have been of no leverage to supply the veracious preposition.

Sentence 10: They're delivering the furniture…..my flat on Tuesday.

They're delivering the furniture <u>to</u> my flat on Tuesday.

Some of the students(fifteen students) have found their way to produce the suitable preposition "to". These students have produced this preposition since they apprehend well that the verb "deliver" requires "to" to follow and the noun phrase "my flat" needs it to precede. "To", as a preposition, tends to be followed by a noun but, as an adverb, can be exercised without a following noun. "To" is used to indicate the relationship of a verb with its complement. "To" is needed to be used with the verb "deliver" (deliver sth to sb) to mean "take sth somewhere", i.e., to take goods, letters, packages, etc to a particular place or person. Most of the students have given "for" in lieu of "to". The misuse occurred here is attributable to mother tongue interference. Literal translation of sentence (10) above has the Arabic preposition "li" indicating the

possessive. "Li" appears to be equivalent to the English prepositions "to" and "for".

Table(22) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item II. (Sentence 10)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	**20**	**57.0**
Correct Responses	**15**	**43.0**
Total	**35**	**100.0**

It is noticed, through Table(22), that fifteen students(43%), out of thirty five, have had the capacity to produce the fit preposition "to". On the other hand, Table(22) displays that twenty students(57%) have lost their means to achieve success. This sentence has scored, regarding correct answers, the second grade in comparison with sentence(5).

6.2.3 Recognition Test: (See Ellis.1994:47-48)

Table(23): Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of the overall item, Recognition, Test III.

Sentence	Correct Responses		Incorrect Responses	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	17	49.0	18	51.0
2	6	17.0	29	83.0
3	18	51.0	17	49.0
4	13	37.0	22	63.0
5	11	31.0	24	69.0
6	11	31.0	24	69.0
7	22	63.0	13	37.0
8	11	31.0	24	69.0
9	21	60.0	14	40.0
10	21	60.0	14	40.0

In this item, the students are asked to recognize the compound prepositions and then to underline them. The compound prepositions, in contrast with the simple ones, consist of more than one word.(See Appendix(III).

Sentence 1: We arrived ahead of time.

We arrived <u>ahead of</u> time.

Phrasal or compound prepositions such as "ahead of" are to be composed of a simple preposition plus a word from another category, such as an adverb, adjective, or conjunction in a position in front of it(see Stageberg,1971:158).

The compound preposition "ahead of" is exercised to refer to a further forward in space or time than sb/sth; in front of sb/sth. In this sentence seventeen students only have been of good ability to recognize the compound preposition "ahead of". Some others, eighteen students, have encountered difficulty to mark "ahead of" as a compound preposition. This can be attributed to the fact that students look at simple prepositions as a real problem for them, therefore they find it more difficult to recognize and understand compound ones. The students cannot perceive well that there are more than one type of compound prepositions and how they can be formed.

Finally, "ahead of" is composed of two parts and it is common for most students to tick it as a compound preposition than those consisted of more than two words with a noun in between such as "in comparison with".

Table(24) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 1)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	18	51.0
Correct Responses	17	49.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(24) denotes the reality that seventeen students only(49%), out of thirty five, have recognized the compound preposition "ahead of" and underlined it. On the opposite side, Table(24) states that eighteen students(51%) have been unable to distinguish the preposition mentioned earlier.

Sentence 2: The game was called off on account of rain.

The game was called off <u>on account of</u> rain.

Here, the compound preposition "on account of" is composed of a preposition followed by a noun and then another preposition. The students find it impossible to decide whether "on account of" is a

compound preposition with a noun or two successive prepositional phrases when the last word is followed by an object. The compound preposition "on account of" means "because of sb/sth". An examination of the English textbooks used by the students, in this connection, clearly reveals, due to my own perspective, that they are of no relevant clarifications and exercises which can be useful for the purpose of concentrating on the use of prepositions in general and the compound ones in particular. Accordingly, the students are of no chance concerning the matter of learning them well or using them correctly.

Table(25) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 2)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	29	83.0
Correct Responses	6	17.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(25) manifests that six students only(17%), out of thirty five, have had the faculty to recognize the compound preposition "on account of". Moreover, it is clear from Table(25) that twenty nine students(83%) have perplexed to recognize "on account of". This sentence, as to correct answers, has scored the lowest degree among all the sentences of item III.

Sentence 3: The oldest daughter is up at the camp.

The oldest daughter is <u>up at</u> the camp.

In this sentence, the compound preposition "up at" is made up of two words and it is simple to regard it a preposition rather than any other part of speech. The preposition "up at" can be used, informal, to refuse to accept sth, especially because you do not think it is good enough.

Table(26) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 3)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	17	49.0
Correct	18	51.0

Responses		
Total	35	100.0

Table(26) notifies us that eighteen students(51%), out of thirty five, have recognized that the compound preposition is of two parts "up at". Other than, Table(26) clarifies that seventeen students(49%) have faced failure while trying to recognize the compound preposition "up at".

Sentence 4: Contrary to our expectations, the movie was a delightful

spoof.

<u>Contrary to</u> our expectations, the movie was a delightful

spoof.

Here, the compound preposition is "contrary to" which is of two parts. "Contrary to" means "different from sth" or "against sth". Most of the students have been of good learning to recognize it because they are familiar with the usage and meaning of this preposition in a context like the one given(see Ellis,1994:59).

Table(27) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 4)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	22	63.0
Correct Responses	13	37.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(27) reflects that thirteen students only(37%), out of thirty five, have been capable of recognizing "contrary to" as the compound preposition in this sentence. Besides, Table(27) demonstrates that twenty two students(63%) have appeared not to be able to recognize this preposition.

Sentence 5: We came by way of Brookline.

We came <u>by way of</u> Brookline.

Concerning this sentence, thirteen students only have recognized "by way of" as the compound preposition because there is a kind of perplexity to make a decision whether this structure is a preposition or a prepositional phrase when the last word is followed by an

object. "By way of" means "by a route that includes the place mentioned". "Via" can be used as a synonym of "by way of" in the sentence context above.

Table(28) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 5)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	24	69.0
Correct Responses	11	31.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(28) attracts the attention to the fact that eleven students only(31%), out of thirty five, have comprehended the compound preposition "by way of" and underlined it. Over and above, Table(28) tells us that twenty four students(69%) have not done well.

Sentence 6: I want to thank you on behalf of these refugees.

I want to thank you <u>on behalf of</u> these refugees.

With respect to this sentence, the compound preposition is "on behalf of" whose meaning, here, is "as the representative of sb or instead of them". Most students have been unable to perceive this preposition because of the students' unfamiliarity with its meaning and the context in which it can be used. This preposition is difficult and not common for students since it is made up of more than two-part constituents. The students cannot recognize whether "on behalf" is a compound preposition and "of these refugees" is a prepositional phrase or "on behalf of" is a compound preposition and "these refugees" is an object.

Table(29) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 6)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	24	69.0
Correct Responses	11	31.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(29) denotes the information that eleven students only(31%), out of thirty five, have marked the compound preposition "on behalf of". On the contrary, Table(29) informs us that twenty four students(69%) have failed to recognize it. The percentage of correct and incorrect responses of Table(28) is the same as that of Table(29).

Sentence 7: They served rice instead of potatoes.

They served rice <u>instead of</u> potatoes.

As to this sentence, the compound preposition "instead of" is composed of two-part constituents. The preposition "instead of" means "in the place of sb/sth". Most students find it easy to apprehend this preposition because it is usual for them and they are accustomed to use it in a sentence context like this one. There is an adequate training with respect to "instead of" in the students' textbooks and it is used commonly in their everyday life.

Table(30) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 7)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	13	37.0
Correct Responses	22	63.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(30) indicates that twenty two students(63%), out of thirty five, have done successfully. At the same time, Table(30) notifies us that thirteen students only(37%) have been incapable of recognizing the compound preposition "instead of".

Sentence 8: They served rice in lieu of potatoes.

They served rice <u>in lieu of</u> potatoes.

As concerns this sentence, the compound preposition "in lieu of" means "instead of" but "in lieu of" is more difficult for most students than "instead of". Most students cannot understand the meaning and use of "in lieu of" in the same way by which they can comprehend the meaning and use of "instead of". "In lieu of" is consisting of two prepositions with a noun in between while "instead of" is composed of two-part constituents only. The students are

familiar with the use and meaning of "instead of" and it can be practiced in their classroom activities.

Table(31) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 8)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	24	69.0
Correct Responses	11	31.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(31) displays that eleven students only(31%), out of thirty five, have checked off " in lieu of" as a compound preposition. In contrast with the information mentioned earlier, Table(31) shows that twenty four students(69%) have not been skillful to do well. As regards correct answers, sentences(5),(6), and (8) have scored the same degree.

Sentence 9: In spite of her protestations, Harriet was persuaded to join the Guild.

<u>In spite of</u> her protestations, Harriet was persuaded to join the Guild.

Here, the compound preposition is "in spite of" whose meaning is "when someone says that sb did sth in spite of a fact, he/she means it is surprising that the fact did not prevent him/her from doing it". The number of students who have done the process of recognizing the compound preposition skillfully is more than that of the students who have lost the capacity to do well. Most students have had a kind of familiarity with the meaning and use of "in spite of". This preposition is practiced by many students in their classroom activities and in their everyday communication.

Table(32) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 9)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	14	40.0
Correct	21	60.0

Responses		
Total	35	100.0

Table(32) suggests the true state of affairs that twenty one students(60%), out of thirty five, have put a mark on the compound preposition "in spite of".

Apart from, Table(32) exhibits that fourteen students(40%) have not been able to find "in spite of".

Sentence 10: In case of accident, call your insurance agent.

<u>In case of</u> accident, call your insurance agent.

In regard to this sentence, the compound preposition is "in case of" which means "if sth happens" (often on official notices). Most students have been acquainted with the meaning and use of "in spite of". This preposition represents one of the most ordinary prepositions for most students since they have studied it from primary schools till this stage of study.

Table(33) Numbers and Percentages of Correct and Incorrect Responses of item III. (Sentence 10)

	No.	%
Incorrect Responses	14	40.0
Correct Responses	21	60.0
Total	35	100.0

Table(33)provides us with the erudition that twenty one students(60%), out of thirty five, have discriminated "in case of" as a compound preposition.

Simultaneously, Table(33) points out that fourteen students have come to nothing while trying to identify "in case of" as a compound preposition.

7. Conclusions:

1. As one preposition has more than one meaning(homonymous) according to the sentence context provided, the students find it difficult to choose the appropriate one. "From", for example, is used, rather than "to" or "than" to express that something is unlike something else, i.e., that something is different from something. Apart from, "from" can be used to refer to the idea of not doing

something as in : They were restricted from junk food. (They did not eat junk food.)

2. The researcher supposes that prepositions appear to form a problematic area for Iraqi and Arab students including native speakers. The analysis concerning simple prepositions in this study proves that some students can select the correct preposition when they are familiar with the use and meaning of that preposition. The students can select the suitable preposition when it is available in their textbooks and it is used by them in their everyday communication and in their classroom activities. Some prepositions of spatial relationships like location seem to be relatively easy to understand(see appendix I sentence 2).

3. The students find it difficult to produce some simple prepositions to fill the blank spaces in the sentences given especially those with which they are not acquainted. The students encounter real difficulty while recognizing and producing prepositions, i.e., it seems difficult for them to recognize the sentences supplied and then to provide the preposition demanded. We conclude that when the students have two tasks(recognition and production), they will face a problem greater than that of recognition only.

4. With respect to some compound prepositions, the students encounter a problem greater than that faced by them when they deal with simple prepositions. Over and above, the students find it more difficult to recognize the compound prepositions consisting of two prepositions with a noun in between such as "in lieu of" than that composed of two parts, i.e., a simple preposition preceded by a word from another category, such as an adverb, adjective, or conjunction like "up to". The words used in these prepositions are of no ability to vary freely in the same way they could in other circumstances. "In spite of", for example, has no ability to change into "*out spite of" or "in spite for".

5. The student should know about the grammatical structures, complexities, possible interference errors and the importance of prepositions. They are the areas where the students most often deviated from Standard English. English prepositions are difficult for any EFL learner because he/she usually relates them to his/her own mother tongue prepositional system. The difficulty is also

caused by the difference in number, meaning and usage of the prepositions in the mother tongue and foreign languages.

6. The main problem for Arab learners, including Iraqi ones, lies firstly in the fact that not every Arabic preposition has a definite equivalent in English and vice-versa, and, secondly in that not every English or Arabic preposition has a definite usage and meaning, indicating only time or space or following/preceding a certain word. For example, the Arabic preposition <u>fii</u> is used as an equivalent of "in", into, at, on, during, within, inside" and also the zero equivalent(?) in English. Idiomatic usage of English prepositions makes them difficult to learn even by native speakers of the language.

7. Students may make three kinds of errors with prepositions: they put them in when not needed, they leave them out when needed, or they use the wrong one. Knowledge can be considered as a power to overcome the problem with prepositions. The teachers must pay a good attention to the process of teaching and learning prepositions. It is a very significant idea to teach prepositions from primary schools to universities, i.e., to be exercised and practiced greatly in classroom activities by encouraging students not to avoid them. In the test used in the present study, the students have used a preposition in Item II Sentence(7) when there is no need to use a preposition at all. This error represents one of the three kinds of errors, mentioned above, committed by the students when trying to use prepositions.

8. Most of the students cannot remember which prepositions are to be used in combination with certain verbs. For example, concerning the test of the present study, the verb "knock" in Item I Sentence(8) needs the preposition "off" to mean "write" but most students have failed to choose it. Using the wrong preposition can distort meaning and mark writing as non-native.

9. The researcher suggests that using cartoon films with characters having names of prepositions such as "in", "on", "across", "until", etc. can be useful for the purpose of making easy the process of teaching and learning prepositions. As cartoon characters are desirable for children and adults as well, so it can be a good technique to achieve the intended goal.

10. The errors committed by the students can be ascribed to the false application of rules as explained in Item II.3 or overgeneralization as clarified in Item I.1 and I.9 in the present study. Mother tongue interference can be shown in Item II.10 and teaching-learning problems in Item II.4.

11. The teachers, unintentionally, may lead their students who try to recognize and produce prepositions to commit errors when the teachers cannot convey correct patterns or concepts(meanings) to their students or do not give adequate exercises and drilling so as to emphasize patterns introduced correctly.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX(I)

University of Anbar Stage: Fourth
College of Arts Time:
Department of English Date:

Dear Students,

I would like greatly to appreciate your answering of the questions below which are concerned with testing your ability to use prepositions in English. Thank you for your cooperation.

Test I: Recognition

Q1/ Write the number of the item and the letter of the word that best fills the blank.

1. I live in the big house……….the corner.
a. on b. in c. of d. to

2. Please put the plates…………the table.
a. over b. for c. to d. on

3. My car will not start because it is…………gas.
a. full of b. out with c. out of d. with no

4. The second hotel was different……..the first.
a. to b. for c. with d. from

5. George was worried……………his father's health.
a. since b. about c. on d. at
6. I don't know how many times I have told my daughter to look at both sides before running…………the street.
a. across b. alongside c. beside d. around
7. My house is…….the grocery store and the gas station.
a. under b. off c. among d. between
8. I have some material from which I could knock………an article if you want me to.
a. up b. down c. together d. off
9. I graduated from college……………2002.
a. since b. on c. in d. at
10.You are really annoying me. You're doing it……purpose, aren't you?
a. about b. of c. on d. in

APPENDIX(II)

Test II: Production
Q2/Complete the following sentences with suitable prepositions.
1. **Can I stay…………the weekend?**
2. **You ought to use this meat………..tomorrow.**
3. **She was standing………..a crowd of children.**
4. **Drinks will be served………the interval.**
5. **Promise you'll write……………me every day.**
6. **Congratulations……………your success.**
7. **Nobody entered…………….the room.**
8. **She sat down……………..me and started talking to me.**
9. **There's a supermarket……………my house.**
10. **They're delivering the furniture…………my flat on Tuesday.**

APPENDIX(III)

Test III: Recognition

Q3. Underline the compound prepositions in the following sentences.

1. **We arrived ahead of time.**
2. **The game was called off on account of rain.**
3. **The oldest daughter is up at the camp.**
4. **Contrary to our expectations, the movie was a delightful spoof.**
5. **We came by way of Brookline.**
6. **I want to thank you on behalf of these refugees.**
7. **They served rice instead of potatoes.**
8. **They served rice in lieu of potatoes.**
9. **In spite of her protestations, Harriet was persuaded to join the Guild.**
10. **In case of accident, call your insurance agent.**

Good Luck